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The Musket

LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT-RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1969

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Volume LXII Issue I—December 2019

LHS Celebrates National Coming Out Day

■ Francis Liu
Andrea Reier
Staff Writers

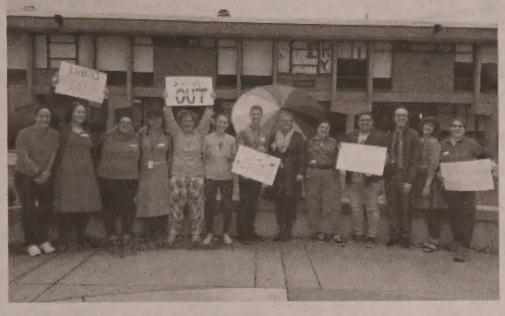

Photo by Jeremie Bateman
Left to Right: Kellie Hurlock, Laura Sheppard-Brick, Rina Mazor, Ann Tenhor, Melissa Buttaro, Marissa Gable, Charles Willis, Ellen Shea, Jessica Khamarji, Jeremie Bateman, Christopher Brunner, Sophie Blum, and Avon Lewis.

On Friday, Oct. 11, rainbow flags waved and music boomed from dawn to dusk across the United States as people celebrated the LGBTQ community and individuals who have come out of the closet. This annual holiday was introduced on Oct. 11, 1988 by Robert Eichberg and Jean O'Leary. It marked the one year anniversary of the Second March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which demanded that same-sex relationships be legally recognized. This holiday was designed to create more awareness for the LGBTQ community, and has been observed in the United States, Ireland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom since its inauguration. Each year from 1999 to 2014, the day came with a theme, such as "Talk About It," "Coming out for Equality," and most recently, "Coming Out Still Matters."

Lexington High School has celebrated this holiday to further its mission of inclusivity and diversity for students and staff alike. Members of the Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) handed out stickers in Commons I which students could use to either identify themselves as a member or ally of the LGBTQ community. Students had the option to be a "vocal supporter" or a "silent supporter" to highlight the different ways people can engage in micro-political action. The holiday is not only meant to support a community but also aims to raise awareness about the effects of discrimination against the LGBTQ community. In fact, the option to be a silent supporter represents members silenced about their experiences as a minority.

Jeremie Bateman, an LHS counselor and a GSA co-adviser, organized a gathering between LGBTQ-identifying faculty and staff members in the quad the morning of National Coming Out Day. Around 13 staff members chose colors to wear and assembled themselves into a human rainbow, holding up signs with various sayings such as "Seek Us Out," "Lex Pride," and "We Support our LGBTQ Students and Faculty." Teachers and staff had the option of wearing a sticker that identified them as an LGBTQ staff member, a new option introduced by the GSA club.

When asked about the primary goal of this project, Bateman touched on the significance of representation.

"I wanted students to see that there are teachers who share their identities because this is one of those things that isn't necessarily visible and I think it's important for students to know that there are adults who may have had similar experiences with those who have gone on to have a happy and successful and productive life," Bateman said.

The project sparked many conversations among students at the school. Many students were excited to know that they weren't alone—there are many teachers who share similar experiences and identities. Likewise, the staff and faculty participants and supporters found it to be a wonderful experience.

"It was great for [staff and faculty] to be able to say, 'This is who we are and this is part of why we do what we do.' So that was really fun… it was nice to do something on top of what the GSA does for National Coming Out Day, which is a more student-orientated thing," Bateman said.

When asked about what LHS can do to continue fostering a supportive environment, Bateman talked about the importance of listening to students' needs.

"When I think about my experience in high school, it was so wildly different from what it is possible now for queer youth that I don't think I'm in a position to say, 'This is what inclusion needs to look like.' What I can do is amplify student voice and speak to what students are saying they need," he said.

The LHS Hype Squad Raises School Spirit

■ Gaeun Suh
Zhuoran Wen
Staff Writers

On Friday Oct. 4, the Lexington High School pep rally took place in the gymnasium. The organization behind this annual tradition was LHS Hype Squad, a club that brainstorms, discusses, and executes ideas to increase school spirit.

This year, the pep rally included activities such as a relay race and bumper ball—a form of capture the flag—where both students and teachers could participate.

"We had events that got everybody excited, and music that had people moving around. We also had teachers get absorbed in the events—students could see their teachers showing school spirit," Chris Cervone, a senior in the Hype Squad, said.

In addition to participating in competitive games, students could show off their unique talents. For example, senior Luke Lee performed a Chinese yo-yo act.

"I was definitely glad to be invited back to perform at [the] pep rally again after last year when I performed with my friend Sean Wu. Although it wasn't my best performance, I was still motivated by the crowd and was happy that I was able to entertain the students. It was a great time and I hope that everyone was able to take a peek at what [Chinese yo-yo] is," Lee said.

The pep rally not only celebrated the diversity of the student body, but also fostered community. In addition to seven other games, the traditional whipped cream eating contest between students and teachers took place at the end of each grade's pep rally.

"The Pep Rally is our biggest project, and it takes lots of organization, advertising, idea-drafting, budget managing, and incentivizing to create that one day of fun. Yet to have a successful day, Hype Squad members needed to overcome many challenges as well...getting participation from students who thought that they were 'too cool' to participate in school spirit events was the biggest challenge," Cervone said.

The Hype Squad also organized Pajama Day and Twin Day for Spirit Week, which gave students a chance to show their school spirit through fun and exciting ways. Besides organizing these major school events, the Hype Squad plays a role in boosting school spirit regularly. Throughout the school year, squad members wear the Minuteman mascot suit around various places in order to promote school spirit.

"It's hard to change the mindset of a class that didn't enter the school with spirit because they are used to that. However, in the next few years, I'm hoping that school spirit becomes a 'popular' aspect of the school. Once it does, I'm sure Hype Squad will gain traction," Cervone said.

School Spirit: We Need More Than One Pep Rally

Editorial Board

School spirit promotes cohesion within the student body. While in recent years, Lexington High School has put in tremendous effort to increase school spirit, there are still ways to further expand and inspire students at our school.

Earlier this year, students at LHS organized pep rallies and spirit days. These would be more effective if they were held frequently, perhaps once a quarter. This could amp up "hype" for each event while making school spirit a year-round activity, not just a one-time occurence.

Unfortunately, the pep rallies took place during class blocks. This led to a loss of class time, something that students found harmful to their education. Some teachers from those classes still assigned homework. Students who wanted to finish their work were prevented from catching up on their assignments because of the event. These pep rallies, along with other school spirit events, should be scheduled at times that will not affect academic performance.

Students generally felt a lack of representation during the pep rally. Often, participants are within similar social circles, causing many spectators to feel distanced from the activities. A solution would be to elect two people from each homeroom to participate in the rally so that everyone would have a familiar face to cheer for. This would make the rally far more exciting and interactive.

Another way to better engage a wider range of students would be to collaborate with clubs. Performances by a cappella groups are a prime example of this. Even if a club was not performance-based, they could be included by having representatives participate in games or organize club-themed events. For example, the Bee Club could host a mini-spelling bee. This would have the additional benefit of sparking interest in clubs that aren't well-known.

Nonetheless, school spirit does not come from a single pep rally. The school's successes also unify the student body. These successes don't just come from the sports teams, but also from STEM teams, the debate team, music groups, and more.

At both of the Lexington middle schools, daily announcements inform students of relevant news like sports team victories or other competitions. LHS should incorporate messages of student successes through overhead announcements during homeroom to increase awareness. The large size of the school makes it difficult to know about students' many accomplishments, leading them to go unnoticed. If students had more information on these events, they could show more support to their peers, whether it be through a greater turnout at home games or even just a congratulatory text. This would create a more tight-knit community within the campus.

Even if a few of these changes were to be implemented, school spirit would be wide-reaching to the entire student body.

Collegebored

Elizabeth Zhang
Columnist

Write. Press a few buttons. Submit. Repeat.

That's how I thought my process would go, but it turns out I was horrifically wrong.

I had to cut words from my resumé on top of the time spent cutting down to those god-awful 650, 250, and 100-word limits. Then, I found out that I had to cut lines too. Yes, lines. There is now a line limit for certain parts of your application, such as your résumé. It's absurd. And they don't tell you about it either! I was just going on my merry way, copying and pasting my resume into the "Additional Info" section when suddenly…

… I clicked "Review and Submit," but there was no green checkmark (a green checkmark indicates that you have completed a section of the Common App). I went back and reviewed my resumé again. I scrolled to the bottom, thinking maybe I forgot to check off a box or something, but when I looked closely, my resumé stopped at the word "Bos." Bos? That's not a word, and it certainly wasn't a word in my resumé. I sat there, pulling at my hair at 1 p.m. on a nice Saturday afternoon, and you're telling me my resumé wouldn't fit? Please tell me this is a joke. I literally spent over an hour cutting down my resumé from 1800 words to the 650 limit, and now you're telling me to cut even more?

I. Don't. Like. It. At this point, I was considering not submitting applications through the Common App at all. "I don't need college," I tried to convince myself. Nevertheless, I tried experimenting with it. I took away all the line break formatting I'd put in there, and voila. It fit (somewhat). I've been trying to submit for three hours, but whatever, I'm doing fine. I sat there for who knows how long trying to get rid of as many lines as I could. Unfortunately, the website just wouldn't give me the nice, little green checkmark. Come on, Common App, I have places to go!

Finally, oh-so-miraculously, the lines fit! I did a Naruto-run around my living room to celebrate (at this point, my parents knew that I had lost my marbles) and clicked the submit button.

And then, it read, "Payment Method." Fees, (not) wonderful fees. There's honestly just too many: you've got the Common App, test scores, portfolios—and they're all quite expensive in addition to the already expensive tuition. And, if you don't get in, you don't get a refund! I mean, hello, if you don't let me go to your school, at least give my money back!

I honestly don't have a purpose for this column other than to rant about how much money I just lost and how long I needed to spend on things I didn't want to do (sorry). I usually end on a positive note, but honestly, college applications and AP Physics 1 tests have made me bawl my brain cells out. I don't really have any IQ left to say anything, but wherever you are and whoever you are, I hope you're having a great day. To all the seniors, congratulations. We made it past round one. Go outside, drink some boba, eat a bag of king-size Milky Ways—celebrate, because we did it. And we can do it again. If we really have to. Hopefully not, though.

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Chromebooks: The Debate is Fully Charged

Angie Leung
Lydia Rommel
Staff Writers

Study halls are a sea of Chromebooks, filled with students typing away at English assignments, comparing world revolutions, and editing complicated spreadsheets. With the exception of seniors, Lexington High School now requires all students to use Chromebooks during the school day. These Chromebooks aim to help students complete assignments for classes, while giving them access to a computer.

"I think it's great that all students have the same device. That they can access all their schoolwork easily, they hold the charge pretty long, and they are not too heavy," Ann Tenhor, a member of the LHS Tech Department, said.

Chromebooks allow those who don't have personal laptops to keep up with the digitalization of LHS and be a part of the transition towards a paperless classroom setting.

They also eliminate the feeling of inequality among students who don't have access to their own personal devices. Non-seniors are required to use a Chromebook, even if they have a separate laptop. Some students find this to have an additional organizational benefit.

"I don't mind using my Chromebook, I think it is easier just to differentiate between schoolwork and outside of schoolwork. I would say I personally prefer using my Chromebook," Alex Hristov, a sophomore, said.

While many students appreciate the addition of Chromebooks to the classroom setting, others wish they could use their devices from home. Some students were not aware of the Chromebook policy before high school, and purchased laptops that they cannot use in school.

"This year we [introduced chromebooks] with all students, but because a lot of seniors had already purchased devices because they were not involved in last year's initial initiative, they would have this one year where they could opt-out," Tenhor said.

The transition from a paper-based classroom in middle school to a digital high school classroom has been hard for some students. However, this is important, as in the coming years, more and more jobs will require at least some computer expertise. Making this change early ensures that once out of high school, students can navigate the digital world.

Moreover, Google Classroom, an important fixture in most classes, reminds students of homework via their Chromebooks. Consequently, they can complete assignments anywhere, and can be contacted directly. Getting work done is now easier for students who don't get home right after school or have long commutes.

"I actually think it's a really good way for teachers to get their stuff out to the students… there's proof of what you're supposed to do, what you didn't do, [and] when you're supposed to do it," Eva Molla, a sophomore, said.

The addition of Chromebooks to the classroom setting means that teachers can easily reach their students with announcements and assignments. In addition, students can utilize many new collaborative learning tools.

Ms. Tenhor stands next to a stack of school-issued Chromebooks
Photo by Athena Li

Time for a New Schedule

Bryant Xia
Garen Sahakian
Staff Writers

The new hour-long blocks and confusing six-day rotation were poorly received when students first heard about the schedule changes. In a school-wide survey taken this January, two-thirds of students preferred last year's schedule to the new one. Two months into the school year, however, the general sentiment has shifted to a more positive viewpoint.

The schedule change process started two years ago when a committee consist ing of faculty, parents, and students met to craft a new schedule aimed at bettering our learning experience. Out of the three options the committee presented earlier this year, the current schedule became the final choice.

"Having about 60 minutes per class allows more effective learning than in our old schedule, where the 48 minute classes were just a bit too short to do the kind of learning that we want to happen in our classes," Kevin Kelly, the math department head and co-chair of the schedule committee, said.

A similar sentiment is echoed in the "Schedule Preference Decision Slide Show," which emphasizes that the old block length limits us from a pedagogical standpoint as the school moves towards a focus on Project Based Learning.

In addition to providing an improved learning experience, the new schedule has other benefits. An issue we saw with the five-day rotation is that Monday's classes met disproportionately less due to no-school holidays. The new schedule, on the other hand, remedies that as it functions independent of weekdays.

A less obvious benefit is that our schedule looks different from week to week, which helps students avoid feeling stuck in a perpetual cycle.

"I enjoy the new schedule because every week is a little bit different, so it keeps things interesting," Evren Arif, a junior, said.

However, the new schedule is not without its flaws. Even two months in, the six day rotation is still confusing.

"I have gotten used to it, but I still need to check the schedule after the weekend," Arif said.

Another concern the community had was that the longer blocks would be detrimental to student concentration. Yet, contrary to these complaints, maintaining focus has not been an issue for most.

"I'm not finding [students zoning out] in my class. In fact, I've been very impressed with how long students have been able to stick with whatever they're doing even when it gets to 60 or 65 minutes," Kelly said.

Embracing change is never easy, especially since our schedule affects us daily. But with increased block lengths, a more appropriate distribution of time, and most importantly, more time to get used to it, the schedule will certainly grow more on students.

Kindergarten Curriculum Changes Across Towns

Vidula Mannem
Staff Writer

In response to the growing demand for more academic challenges at an earlier age, towns across Massachusetts have been shifting the focus of their kindergarten curriculums. Parents and teachers have been voicing concerns about the new-found rigor of school for kindergarteners.

In 2008, Lexington implemented a full-day kindergarten curriculum, which raised mathematical and literacy standards. These new guidelines have increased students' interest in math by emphasizing problem-solving, willingness to make mistakes, and having fun. However, the literacy standards seem to have the opposite effect.

"The reading benchmark certainly has increased since I started," Jean Button, a kindergarten teacher at Fiske Elementary School, said. "Now, [kindergarteners] need to reach a reading level where they're able to retell a story, say what their favorite part is, say who the characters are, say what the setting is, and make connections to a story."

Although most teachers agree that high-quality education in preschool and kindergarten is essential for a student's academic success later on, they also believe that the development of social and emotional skills are equally important.

"Kindergarten really sets the foundation for students to be learners and for students to be students, so there are really important skills that they have to learn," Zeba McGibbon, a kindergarten teacher at Bridge Elementary School, said. "But I think a lot of times people focus too much on the academics and not enough on the skills on how to be a learner, to be a good friend, and to be a good person."

In contrast, some teachers think the changes are less curriculum oriented and only mildly affect the academic career of kindergarteners.

"In my time in Lexington, the curriculum hasn't changed a whole lot," Mayumi Kearns, a kindergarten teacher at Bowman Elementary School, said. "There have been changes in school focuses, but [they seemed] to be a school-based decision, not a curriculum decision."

These changes might not be profound because Lexington elementary schools have always maintained a strong academic focus while incorporating a well-engineered classroom environment that engages young students.

"Kindergarten is a very busy time, but it's also very fun. We [teach] in such a way so that the students are learning and learning and learning. And that's the joy and the challenge of kindergarten, we have to be entertaining while delivering those high academics," Kearns said. "Kindergarten is really one of the most important years in school; we work on their social and emotional development."

Thinking Outside the Blocks

Rachel Zhang
Sarah Meyer
Staff Writers

When the new six-day schedule was announced late last year, the students of Lexington High School were plunged into a state of confusion. Luckily, Ben Borgers, a junior, came up with a solution: the Blocks app.

Blocks is an innovative, LHS-specific program which helps students know what classes they have each day. Borgers created it in less than a week of coding this past summer, and has added updates throughout the school year.

Borgers made the app after hearing that others thought an app to display and keep track of the new schedule would be useful.

"I would basically come back from work and work on it after dinner … until maybe 11," Borgers said, and within six days, he had completed the beta version of the app.

The first person to use the Blocks app was Borgers's friend, Khoi Le, a junior at LHS, who was instrumental in its eventual success.

"The number of users was over 50 and I was like, 'Oh wow, Khoi's doing a lot of sending this around,'" Borgers said.

Unlike most other apps, Borgers runs through a website which functions as an app when added to the home screen of a user's phone.

"...if you update an app in the App Store, you have to send it back through and they have to approve it again, which sounds like a pain, so, I decided [to] just make [the app] a website," Borgers said.

Borgers used his extensive experience with appbuilding to develop Blocks. Because of this experience, he was able to structure the app to be easy to use.

In the last month, over 1,100 people have used Blocks, which Borgers believes is a testament to how many people find it valuable. It is used on a daily basis by students and teachers alike, especially on half days and days with irregular schedules. For Borgers, this number is gratifying, but also adds a lot of pressure.

"It's like a cliché, but it's actually really rewarding to know. It's also kind of scary, because now every time I change anything I have to test it really carefully to make sure that I'm not about to break everybody's copy of the app," Borgers said.

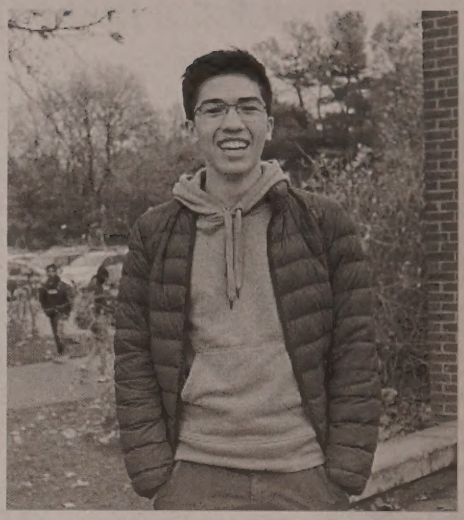
Currently, the app can function without Wi-Fi as Wi-Fi is not always accessible around the school. In addition to this update, Borgers has made numerous changes based on student feedback.

"It's kind of slowed down now, but there are people that were coming up with … some really good ideas like the 'Tomorrow' [feature]," Borgers said.

For students, this app has been immensely useful and demonstrates the resourcefulness of the LHS student body.

While Borgers is open to altering the app in the future, he is currently content with it.

"Right now, I feel like it's at a good place where it's usable [and] could stay like this," Borgers said.



Ben Borgers, creater of Blocks
Photo by Athena Li

Volleying for Volunteering: Rosie's Place Spotlight

Sarah Liu
Sidharth Vij
Staff Writers

On Oct. 18, the Lexington High School girls' volleyball team participated in a community service excursion to support Rosie's Place.

Rosie's Place is a shelter that provides women in need and their children with food, emergency housing, as well as advocacy services, and holds the title of the first women's shelter established in the United States.

As an all-girls organization, the girls' volleyball team felt that it was a cause that they identified with.

"I think overall it was just a really meaningful experience and it helped our team bond," Sally Sukhia, a freshman team member, said. "[Our team values] having each other's backs and working together and supporting each other." The team helped Rosie's Place by spending a day washing dishes, cooking food, and serving meals to women. In addition to volunteering, the team also donated $5,000 to the shelter, which they raised through car washes.

The girls' volleyball team felt they gained new insights from the experience of volunteering and helping out at Rosie's Place.

"It makes us understand the outside world better," Joanne Zhou, a freshman player, said. "I think it was a good chance for us to see the other side of the world… seeing a homeless shelter, we got to understand what other people's lives are like, and also helping them out just made us feel really happy."

Volunteering at Rosie's Place also introduced team members to volunteer service in general, and provided them with an experience to build off of in the future.

"Because this was my first experience with doing community service, it was a good opportunity to learn how it works so that I can continue doing it in the future," Sunhee Heo, a freshman player, said.

Am I a Monster?

Emily Weinberg
Columnist

We are told to fear the unknown, and what's more unknowable than what we can't see?

Psychological thrillers are often the scariest movies, deriving their entertainment value from how they portray psychological behaviors. Still, we must ask ourselves: do they perpetuate the stereotypes that we hold of people with mental illnesses?

During the suspense unit in my Creative Writing and Publication class, a couple of my classmates wrote about mental illness, which made me think about its relationship with horror movies. All scary stories are based on fear of what we can't understand, which makes perfect sense, seeing as mental illness is often misunderstood in the media.

Although including depictions of mental health in our media may help reduce stigma, television, and movies often misportray it. We need to be cautious about romanticizing or ostracizing people struggling with mental disorders.

With the recent popularity of the Netflix series "13 Reasons Why" and the movie "Joker," young audiences are being exposed to increasingly harmful portrayals.

Horror movies and thrillers often use stereotypes linking the "outcast" to mental illness. These characters—the stalkers, the ghosts, the murderers—are unliked; in other words, they are the villains.

One of the main reasons I question horror movies is because when I was younger, I watched one that had the setting of a horrifying asylum. I remember thinking that's what psychiatric hospitals must really be like. Years later, when my depression became too hard for me to manage on my own, I was placed as an inpatient in McLean Psychiatric Hospital. I was terrified when I found out I had to go there because I had images of the creepy figures and violence of my childhood movies.

As an inpatient, I found out that everything I had been told was not real. McLean was clean and allowed patients to feel safe. People were not isolated and were treated as human beings. Asylums are very different from psychiatric hospitals. The idea of a terrifying hospital has been created by the media to scare their audiences, which is very similar to what the press does regarding mental conditions themselves.

Part of me wants to say that we should never include mental illness in shows because I know firsthand how media can warp people's views in a harmful way. But that might undermine the very genre of horror movies. When thinking about different thrillers, all the ones that come to mind are those focused on psychological disorders.

If we can't stop these movies from being made, the least we can do is show people who do not suffer from mental conditions that these depictions are overexaggerated in film. We can highlight good examples of mental illness representation in the media, such as movies like "The Perks of Being a Wallflower," and "A Beautiful Mind." People struggling with mental illnesses are not monsters but those facing real medical conditions.

A Novel Experience: There There

Vedanti Bhargava
Staff Writer

2019 Pulitzer Prize-nominated author Tommy Orange visited Lexington High School on Oct. 28 to speak with students about his critically acclaimed novel, *There There*.

Two years ago, LHS hosted Yaa Gyasi, author of Homegoing, for a similar event. The success of the visit and the support from the community inspired a department-wide initiative to bring similar opportunities to LHS, led by English teacher Samantha St. Lawrence.

"I became really interested in not letting this kind of idea and initiative die. If we are going to be able to bring in diverse authors, it shouldn't be limited to one race or perspective," St. Lawrence said.

The limited amount of indigenous representation in the English curriculum inspired the summer reading assignment of *There There* across multiple grades.

The novel weaves together multiple Native perspectives from an Oakland community to form a story that explores contemporary challenges urban Native American communities face. Each character's individual narrative develops an accurate representation of the indigenous experience today in the eyes of Tommy Orange.

As a registered member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, Orange stays close to home in his first novel.

"For Native writers, there's a kind of burden to set the record straight because it's been told wrong so long," Orange said in an interview with NPR. He describes how this propelled him to include a range of experiences in his novel in order to humanize the indigenous community.

While the novel tackles difficult themes such as substance abuse and mental health, students were able to thoroughly engage with the content.

"One of the difficult parts of reading texts like this is examining hard history... but its an exercise for kids to practice, so as adults thinking about other people is not so hard," St. Lawrence said.

The novel resonated with many students at LHS who found reading it to be an educational experience.

"To be honest, I didn't really have much information about the Native American community beforehand, but it did change my mind about the basic information we learn in school," Mira Belanger, a sophomore, said.

After reading the novel, many students looked forward to gaining insight into the book from the author's visit.

"As the reader we kind of try and infer what the author is trying to say, but to really have the author there to explain exactly what they meant is something that I really looked forward to," Malvika Iyer, a sophomore, said.

In a final survey conducted to gain insight on student perspectives for the whole process, many students shared positive responses.

"Some of the responses I've read that have affirmed for me and my colleagues this is a program worth pursuing is I have kids in my class who have never met a Native person before and that's kind of what this program comes back to: exposure and representation and seeing the different ways people and author can look and be in the world," St. Lawrence said.

Samantha St. Lawrence holds a copy of Tommy Orange's There There
Photo by Garen Sahakian

FREX: French Exchange

Daisy Li
Sanjay Mallikarjun
Staff Writers

As part of an annual exchange program, students from Descartes High School in Antony, France, were hosted by Lexington High School students in the French program from Oct. 4 to Oct. 17.

The French students lived with the American hosts and shadowed them at school to experience life as an American high schooler. Later this year, students from LHS will travel to both Antony and Geneva, Switzerland, for the second leg of this program.

LHS students who hosted students from Antony noted how interacting with native French speakers was beneficial to their learning of French.

"To be in an immersive experience, hanging out with someone who speaks French fluently because it's their first language and learning about what life is like for them as a high schooler, it ties everything together from what I've learned about culture and what I know now," Emily Ma, a senior and the clerk of the program, said.

Despite the amount of responsibility placed on LHS students, they found the program to be an enjoyable experience.

"Honestly, I thought I'd have a harder time with managing my schoolwork and finding time to hang out with the French exchange people, but I think it was a lot easier than I thought," Jamin Seo, a junior, said.

As one would expect, cultural differences between the two groups resulted in difficulties communicating.

"They definitely speak more freely. And here I feel like we try to avoid like, I don't know, they're just more upfront, like not rude, but they speak their mind," Ma said.

These cultural differences did occasionally create awkward situations.

"[We] had this group thing where if they said something offensive, we would have to tell them, 'Oh we don't say that here, we don't do that here.' You just have to tell them because they don't know that they're being rude," Ma said.

However, students were able to move past these difficulties.

"You would think that you'd come across so many different problems and awkward moments and all that, but it all just came together," Ma said.

Students formed close relationships with the students from Antony and found the experience enjoyable.

"I'm making my lifelong friendships... and hopefully my French gets a lot better... just experiencing French in the real world, outside of the classroom, is really exciting," Seo said.

Left to Right, Top Row: Darshana Venkhatesh, Ethan Kanef, Andrew Shen, Sai Lavanya Lakshminarayan, Zella Goodell, Ana Burwell, Joy Gong, Kaitlyn Driscoll Bottom Row: Pranathi Srirangam, Emily Ma, Sylvia Mare, Jamin Seo
Photo by Disha Sankholkar

A Lex Waiter's Perspective

Evan Li
Columnist

Royal Indian Bistro, or RIB, is a popular destination for Lexington High School students. The cozy spot on Meriam Street in the Lexington own center features curries, Tandoori dishes, and other traditional Indian cuisine. I've frequented ths dim lit, red hued restaurant with friends and family during half-days and weekends.

David Cser is a senior at LHS who's been working at RIB since the start of the school year. His brother, a former LHS student, also worked there in high school; both have enjoyed the experience. I interviewed him to get a peek into what it's like to work at this exciting restaurant in Lexington.

David's daily duties include a wide variety of tasks. He handles customer service, taking in-person and phone orders from patrons, cleaning the dishes and packing food for takeout. he's become fluent with the RIB menu, memorizing a multitude of Indian dishes. His favorite is Chicken Chili Masala, a spicy, flavorful curry served with veggies and rice. David usually works two to three times a week, and suggests that students who work in restaurats do homework a day or two ahead if they know they have work the next day. he also cautions aspiring restaurant workers to expect long hours. At RIB, David sometimes works until 10 pm. He's grateful that his boss, Ravinder, allows him to leave ahead of time if he has a lot of homework.

David believes his experience thus far has been extremely educational and fun. He often finds himself serving fellow classmates, while also makig friends with frequent-goers. The best part, David says, is that Ravinder makes food at the end of every shift. Ravinder doesn't just make the workers food on the menu; David has enjoyed free tacos, sandwiches, and even cheesecake.

RIB has quick service and a relaxed ambience, making it a great destination if you are looking for a sit-down restuarant while being pressed for time. if you do go, my personal recommendations include the mango lassi (ask for less sugar), garlic naan and Nizami Biryani!

Artist of the Issue: Melanie French

Bella Gharabegian
Sreenidhi Dharmaraj
Staff Writers

Melanie French, Senior, finds joy in her passion for pottery.
Photo by Athena Li

Many students at Lexington High School pride themselves on putting their energy into what they are passionate about, whether it be academics, clubs, sports teams, or the arts. As one of the school's prominent artists, senior Melanie French speaks to the passion of LHS students.

Influenced by her mother, she first became fascinated by ceramics when they lived in New Hampshire. Although her mother never got the chance to continue the art, French seized her chance during freshman year in the Ceramics course. Since then, French has gained an additional 19 art credits from the required eight and commandeered a strong presence in the LHS art community, whether that be through her pieces or by becoming a teacher's assistant.

French became a TA for the beginner's class in the second semester of her junior year after completing all three ceramics classes offered at LHS. Although being a TA eats up her free time, French thoroughly enjoys guiding the beginner classes and the position has only amplified her commitment to ceramics. The opportunity to be a TA presented her with a leadership role in the art community and strengthened her bond with Erin Patterson, a ceramics teacher.

"I've been just a big part of the program and I've been in it since I was a freshman. She's [Patterson] asked me so much like, 'Oh you think this is gonna go well?' and I feel like I've been good at outreach to the students," French said.

Like many others in their final year of high school, French has her mind set on college and plans to be an Emergency Medical Technician, ultimately aspiring to become a nurse. Regardless of her future endeavors, however, French plans to stay in touch with her artistic side.

Apart from nursing, French hopes to start her own ceramics studio and continue to pursue her passion for the art.

Fall Play is Composed by LHS Theatre Troupe

Varun Suraj
Rebecca Gu
Staff Writers

This year's fall play, The Mendelssohn Project, will be written by the directors and cast, rather than receiving and working with a prewritten, often heavily-lauded script.

The decision to write the play from scratch was made by the directors, performing arts teachers Jillian Singer-Wong and Andrew Lease. It is a process that they generally repeat every four years to give all students the experience once in their high school career.

"We mainly just gave [the students] a starting point, and they took it and ran with it," Singer-Wong said. "They do everything on their own from research to even making decisions by themselves by voting."

The play tells two stories intercut between each other. The first is about the life of Fanny Mendelssohn, the 19th century composer and sister of the famous composer Felix Mendelssohn, and will document her struggles as a woman in the music industry. The second story is a modern story of a woman trying to get her work published.

Both historical and creative thinking was required to write the script. The cast thoroughly researched historical figures relating to the story to form scenes, at which point they identified common themes and came up with ideas to match those ideas.

"Writing the play from scratch has just been fundamentally different from past years," Carlos Fruzzetti, a senior in the play ensemble, said. "This year, it's just everybody working hard to write a script, everybody working together to create this story as an ensemble, and that's something that's really cool."

A higher sense of connection to the play has been present this year as well.

"There's a sense of more intimacy and feeling closer to the script that we've written because we know our original intentions behind it," Fruzzetti said.

There have been changes to the general production plan. Because the script needed to be written completely, other aspects were given less time, putting more of a time crunch on the cast and crew.

The cast and directors also felt that writing the play made them more responsible for the messages that they want to convey in the play. However, there are ways in which writing the play made the rest of the production easier, such as being able to memorize lines a lot faster.

Singer-Wong and Lease described the process of a whole ensemble creating a script themselves as devising. LHS's decision to implement devising reflects broader trends in the theatre community, as it becomes an increasingly common practice.

"In the future, [the students] will look back at this and realize how much they have learned in the long run," Lease said.

This year's play will be held on Thursday, Nov. 21, and will conclude on Saturday, Nov. 23. Tickets will sell for $5 for students and $10 for adults.

Khoi Le Performs with the LHS Chamber Orchestra

Junior Khoi Le plays piano ahead of performance.
Photo by Olivia Hoover

Anika Basu
Staff Writer

As a winner of last year's Lexington High School Concerto Competition, pianist and junior Khoi Le performed as a soloist alongside the LHS Chamber Orchestra on Nov. 5.

During the competition, instrumentalists performed on stage with an accompanist for a judge audience of orchestra conductor Rachel Jayson and three others. Le, along with two other students, were chosen to perform at various concerts throughout the year.

Le's rationale for participating was that he felt it would benefit him as a musician.

"I like to find outputs for my music-competing in the concerto competition was a fantastic way to get some feedback on my performance from a jury… it was really an honor to compete with some of the greatest high school musicians in the state, if not the country," Le said.

Although Le has been playing piano since he was five years old, it wasn't until the end of middle school that he discovered his passion for both learning and performing music. Le then expanded into other instruments, such as the violin, cello, and bassoon, as well as chamber music.

Le performed an impressive three times during the concert. Along with his solo, he played for wind ensemble and Percussion Ensemble, a student-run group that he leads.

Le's large investment in music can be explained by his enjoyment for the performative aspect of playing a piece.

"I love performance because of the unspoken interaction between audience and performer…performances hold so many unknowns that often I even find myself discovering something new about the piece every time I perform it for an audience," Le said.

While his focus is on classical music, Le says he is interested in delving into other genres of music in the future.

Patrick the Lonely Pumpkin
PATRICK WAS EXCITED FOR HIS FIRST HALLOWEEN EVER!
HE WAS GOING TO MAKE LOTS OF FRIENDS
BUT EVERYONE IGNORED HIM
PATRICK STARTED TO CRY...
... UNTIL...

■ Emily Ma
News Editor

Students: Robbed of a Safe Gym?

■ Darren Tran
Columnist

On October 15th at 1:15 p.m., I came back to the boys' locker room after my flag football class only to find that all of the pockets of my backpack had been opened. "Maybe I just forgot to close them up before I left," I thought to myself.

Upon further inspection, however, I discovered that my one-dollar bill and phone had been stolen. A somewhat humorous outcome from this entire situation was that whoever had stolen my phone had left my CharlieCard (I keep it on the back of my phone, inside a clear silicone case).

I had already known that thievery in the boys locker room was an issue. However, I was quite surprised to hear that many of my friends had been affected by locker-room theft but never talked about it.

"I left a bag full of my formal clothes that I had to wear before my track meet. I came back the next day first thing in the morning, it wasn't there. It was $100 worth of stuff," Raunak Anand, a sophomore, said.

"I had $80 stolen from me two years ago, and then another $15 last year in the boys' locker room," David Cser, a senior, said.

Sure, some might say to lock your valuables up, but these thieves are stealing more than just valuables.

Many of my friends are missing graphing calculators, pen bags, folders and notebooks.

Another question this unfortunate incident led me to ask was if there is also a problem in the girls locker-room?

"I didn't have enough space in my locker so I left my shoes on the bench. When I came back, they were gone," Sofie Huntington, a sophomore, said.

What are we supposed to do now? We can't fit all of our possessions in our locker. Not only is it a hassle, but in a school that prides itself on a fast-paced academic environment, the extra time it takes to pack up will inevitably increase the number of students late to class. Students could bring their bags with them into the gymnasium, but that takes away the purpose of a locker room.

Before blaming the students for trusting that a school locker-room was a safe place, we should first question the lack of effort that goes into protecting students.

After reporting my stolen property to the school, I was told that they would do their best to find it, or at least do something about it. It's been two weeks and I have not heard back, and I doubt I will ever figure out what happened to my phone.

So what can the school do? Well, at least they are moving forward, a little. A new rule was enacted a few days after I reported my incident. Basically, any student found in the locker room during class time will face suspension. This will cut down on the number of thefts but avoids the bigger issue, which is administration passivity. It is startling and even sad that students are fearful of a place where they are supposed to feel safe.

Currently, Lexington High School has a facade of an elite, academically successful high school. Due to this, the school seems to push all of its many issues under the rug. Fine, they may acknowledge them, but have they ever done anything to fix them? If so, enlighten me. The issue of locker room theft is just one of many in a long series that I want to discuss, and is an example of the neglect to student needs.

Call me a dissenter, but I will offer a solution. I urge that the administration, while dealing with issues, stop victim-blaming and take the side of the affected student. By doing so, students may feel like the school is on their side and there to protect them. Not only will this help reduce thefts in the locker room, but it will also develop a more effective dynamic between the student body and the administration, which will be beneficial in the long-term for both.

Just a reminder: I do not wish for any bad blood between the student body and the administration. This column is just to highlight student experiences and bring their needs and concerns to the forefront.

Watch in Awe as I Sip with my Metal Straw!

■ Ria Vasishtha
Columnist

If you have been staying up-to-date with the newest trends, you might be aware of the rise in using metal straws instead of plastic ones. Despite their simple nature, there is more to these reusable straws than meets the eye.

In all honesty, the video of a straw being removed from a turtle's nose sparked my interest in the environment. Like an increasing portion of students, I have considered using reusable straws instead of plastic ones.

Besides the trend itself, the use of metal straws has been debated frequently, as many believe that plastic straws prove useful to those reliant on them for hygienic purposes. Even some environmentalists have spoken out against the use of metal straws, claiming that they are useless and pollute the environment during the manufacturing process,which undermines the whole purpose of using them.

In my opinion, these straws are just one small step of creating a smaller carbon footprint. Although plastic straws make up a small percentage of plastic waste, they harm the environment and pollute the earth.

I would compare plastic straws to Syndrome from The Incredibles. He began as a minor character whose schemes started small but were constantly fueled by his anger and malicious actions. In this case, the harmful effects of plastic straws on the environment may have started out seemingly innocuous, but over time, everyday consumption has escalated to over 500 million! This number will continue to increase to the point where our beaches will be polluted with straws, killing both wildlife and the Earth.

Until our community is able to rid itself of our dependence on straws, I believe metal straws are the best alternative.

Visit https://musketnews2.wixsite.com/lexmusket for more content!

The New Pool is a Shallow Solution

Ashna Mitta
Srija Ghosh
Staff Writers

Due to construction at the Minuteman High School, the girls' and boys' swim teams of Lexington High School have lost their practice location. Currently, the teams practice at the pool inside Hanscom Field, but this will not be a permanent solution.

"This was really upsetting for the swimming community, not just for high school students. A lot of swim clubs like Gators, North Shore, and summer programs rely on the Minuteman pool since it's one of the only accessible indoor pools in Lexington," Maya Lamm, co-captain of the girls' swim team, said.

The swimmers faced a wide range of issues with the new pool, including complications with paperwork and security. Their lack of familiarity with the new pool also affected the team's performance.

"We couldn't host any home meets, which was really rough because a home meet gives you an advantage since you know how the water in the pool feels," Lamm said.

The pool venue change has taken also taken a toll on the swimmers' education.

"Previously, our practices were from 5-7 p.m., but since they were right after school this year, that meant that people on the swim team really couldn't stay after school to get help from teachers if they were falling behind classes, and with the new schedule giving us fewer I Blocks, it was really hard to keep up our academics while still committing to our team," Lamm said.

This situation may become even more complicated because of next year's later start times, which may cause scheduling conflicts with other schools' teams. However, the swim team currently does not have an alternative to Hanscom.

"[Yes], we've thought of so many options for pools, but Hayden is too small, BSC does not have open time for us, the YMCA will not allow us to swim, and the town pool is outdoors." Lamm said.

Although the pool at Hanscom poses many challenges, the swimmers are still appreciative of the space.

"I am so thankful that we were allowed to swim at Hanscom because I honestly have no idea what we would have done. I also think that even with this huge change I think we gained a lot. It felt less crowded and I think that our team bonded more honestly because we spent so much time together on the bus ride there and back," Jessica Schroeder, fellow co-captain of the girls' swim team, said.

Athlete of the Issue

Nairi Enright, LHS lacrosse player
Photo by Matt Pearlman

Alex Fan
Aditi Kalia
Staff Writer

Seniors hoping to play sports in college undergo a lengthy recruitment process. This past June, Nairi Enright, a senior and member of the Lexington High School girls' varsity lacrosse team, was recruited by Babson College.

Like any other athlete, Enright was elated when she first heard the news.

"When I got the call and heard that it was going well, and admissions said that it was looking pretty good, it was really exciting… I think it happens to everyone, if you get into your top choice or if you get into a school you really like," Enright said.

Although Enright had received offers from other universities, Babson College was her top choice because as a Division III player, she is able to have a more flexible level of commitment to the sport.

"When I committed, it was pretty much based on what I wanted to do in my future. I do love lacrosse and it would be really fun to play it at an extremely high level, but I think that sometimes I do need a break from it," Enright said.

She noted the exhaustion she experienced as a year-round athlete.

"When I was playing it all year round, it just becomes so much, and it really takes a toll on you mentally. I don't think I could handle the mental part of just playing it all year round. I like being able to have a break from it. I picked Division III overall, because I really like that aspect, that you get time off, and you have the ability to meet people outside of the sport."

When asked about how she first got into lacrosse, Enright credited it to her family background.

"My brothers and my dad played, so I got into it when I was three… I was always around it. My brothers and my dad played in college, so I [was] always motivated to keep playing it when I was younger… from then on, I just kept playing. I played other sports as well, lacrosse was just my earliest."

Enright has always planned to play lacrosse at the college level.

"The idea was always in my head," said Enright, "even when I was in middle school or elementary school. I always looked up to my brothers and my dad, and I was like, 'It would be so much fun to play,' I always assumed that that was the next step... It was also something I really wanted to, I just always enjoyed sports in general, and I really like lacrosse."

For Enright, college recruitment started at the age of thirteen. In spite of the early start, the process has not always been easy.

"It was incredibly stressful. You're playing, and you play for the enjoyment of the sport, but then you're also playing for this goal of going to college. For that, you need to perform in front of coaches, the pressure of that can really consume you."

However, Enright overcame her struggles. She reflected on her growth as a student athlete.

"You also don't know what you want when you're young. Like in eighth grade, I had a completely different idea of what I wanted. Even in February of this year, I had a completely different idea of what I'm doing now—things just change so much."

Remembering Bob Farias

Laasya Chiduruppa
Kylin Gao
Staff Writers

On Sep. 23, Bob Farias, the head coach of the Lexington High School basketball team, passed away.

Farias, member of the Westfield State University Athletics Hall of Fame and Presidential Basketball receiver, was a prominent member of the LHS community.

While the front halls of LHS hold the trophies of his 18 Middlesex league titles and 567 won games, his story extends far beyond the shiny awards hanging in the hallway.

"He was a hard coach to play for," Tom Brinkclow, a former basketball player and current educator at LHS, said. "Very loud, and very demanding, but very fair."

Zach Friedman, another former player and current LHS baseball coach, echoed these sentiments when recounting the high-pressure situations on the court.

"[Our relationship] became a tough love kind of relationship because he was hard on me," Friedman said. "But it was worth it."

Even after his death, Farias continues to have a major impact on the lives of the students he coached. Both players reminisced about his dedication to his athletes.

"He's my mentor because I still coach today and he taught me so much about coaching," Brincklow said. "[To be a good coach] what you have to do is you have to get a lot of involvement with your players, and you got to get your players to trust you as a coach."

Farias also strengthened the relationships between his players.

"He helped create an environment where you had to be very close with your teammates," Friedman said. These bonds lasted past high school; Friedman has stayed in touch with his coach and former teammates, even inviting them to his wedding.

Farias' legacy doesn't end at the basketball court. He was also an educator at the ACE program, which works closely with academically struggling students, for many years.

"He touched a lot of kids' lives, but not just basketball players. He touched a lot of kids' lives who were going to be thrown out of school or flunk out of school. [He] gave them a second and third chance here at the high school," Brinkclow said.

His legacy continues in the care he showed for his players.

"I think he made high school sports feel like important in the grand scheme of life. Maybe when you lose a high school basketball game it's important, but I really remember him before games playing on Fridays and getting home to a lot of your friends and family. He really made those moments feel really important and special," Friedman said.

When asked about the most important memories of Farias, Brincklow recalled getting a phone call from his former coach while in Westfield State University.

"Getting that phone call in 1992 when I was with five guys in college, and asking if I want to coach with him, I think that's probably the biggest thing. Because I look back to it now 26 years later I'm still coaching...I learned it with him, you know," Friedman said.

Who was Bob Farias? A tough-love, intense basketball coach? A Lexington ACE educator? A loving mentor and friend way past high school? The answer? Family.